

# House of Commons Debates.

## SPEECH OF THE HON. EDWARD BLAKE ON THE FRANCHISE BILL,

*Delivered in the House of Commons, at Ottawa, Friday, April 17th, 1885.*

Mr. BLAKE. Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman who has just addressed us informed us that the measure which is submitted for our consideration is by no means a complicated measure. He apologised quite unnecessarily for the length of his speech, he told us that discussion was invited, and he declared to us, after having to some extent enlarged upon the liberal view of the Government as to the propriety of discussion, that a whole day might even be exhausted, that eight or ten hours might be given to us to debate this measure, in the course of which time he said, the views which were necessary might be interchanged and the measure properly adjusted. Now, I join issue with the hon. gentleman as to this not being a complicated measure. I say it is, and I do not complain altogether that it is, because, in part, of necessity it is a complicated measure. A measure for the establishment of the character of the franchise in a country like ours, and for the establishment of a mode of ascertaining who, under the law, are entitled to vote, is of necessity a complicated measure, is of necessity a difficult measure, unless some general principle is to be adopted, which no one on either side of the House, has proposed, and which, neither in the United Kingdom nor here, has as yet been adopted, except in some of those Provinces which the hon. gentleman has somewhat contemptuously, more than once this afternoon, alluded to as

the smaller Provinces. I say, therefore, that I do not altogether attribute the complexity of the measure to the fault of those who framed it. In part, I believe it to be of unnecessary complexity; but, in part also, I admit that any measure for the ascertainment of the franchise, based upon the general views which have regulated such measures in the United Kingdom and in the bulk of the Provinces of Canada, is, in its nature, complicated and difficult. I shall go further to establish the correctness of this view of mine, as to the necessary complication and the necessary difficulty of a measure of this description, than merely setting my opinion against that of the hon. the Secretary of State, for I know very well that, by about two to one, if our opinions are set one against the other, in the vote, if not in the heart, his opinion will prevail. I shall therefore, adduce testimonies as to the complexity and difficulty of a measure of this description, and as to the time which a measure such ought to occupy before it is disposed of testimonies, of a character which will be of greater weight with hon. gentlemen opposite than anything that I might hope to say. As has been more than once remarked, we have not before us now, to-day, for the first time, a Government measure for the establishment of a uniform franchise for Canada. The proposition that such a measure should be enacted was laid before us on

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the first day on which, with a Speaker in the Chair, the House of Commons of Canada assembled in this chamber. On the first day after the election of a Speaker, when the Speech from the Throne was delivered, in the year 1867, it was announced, under a Government of which the Premier was the present first Minister, that such a measure would be brought forward; and I need go no further than to say that, in the year 1867, it was announced as the policy of the Government, that the Government has been in power ever since that time, with the interval of five years only, and that we are, to-day, engaged in the discussion of the question whether such a measure is fit or not, to prove that the view of the hon. the Secretary of State as to the simplicity and easiness of such a measure as this must be wrong, unless we are to imply that the Government which announced that, as part of its policy, in the first Speech from the Throne delivered to a Canadian Parliament, was not honest and sincere in the enunciation of that policy. If it was honest and sincere in the view that a uniform franchise ought to be established, and established by this Parliament, for the return of members of this House of Commons, and if the measure is one of easiness and simplicity, why has it not been done? I say, as I have said, that the Speech from the Throne of the first Session proves it; but I shall go a little further. That Speech declares thus:

"You will also be asked to consider measures——"

Among others——

"For the establishment of uniform laws relating to elections and the trial of controverted elections."

So that we were promised, in the year 1867, by the right hon. gentleman, the measure which we are now engaged in debating. But why did we not go on with it during that Session? Why did we not attend to that business during that Session? Was it because it was a short and easy and simple business?

Let me give you the right hon. gentle-

man's own statement of the reason; let me give you his views of what, at that time, were the conditions for proper and effectual discussion of a measure of this description. In March he said in the House. I quote from the report:

"That it was not the intention of the Government during that Session to submit any measures respecting the qualification of electors or elected."

Why?

"The Reform Bill, when brought forward, would be found so complete and comprehensive as properly to occupy the attention of an entire Session."

Is this measure complete? Is this measure comprehensive? If it be incomplete, fragmentary, rudimentary, if it deals only in a perfunctory manner with the question, then, of course, the words I read may be said not to apply; but that excuse would carry in itself the condemnation of the present measure, the ripe fruit of eighteen years of contemplation by the hon. gentleman of this political duty which he is to discharge. I will not say that it is incomplete, I will not say that it is not comprehensive. The right hon. gentleman declares that it is complete, that it is comprehensive, and that it is the full and effectual fruit of all the wisdom, of all the meditation, of all the consideration that he has been able to give this question which he pledged himself to Parliament to settle eighteen years ago, and in the settling of which he is now engaged. Well, Sir, if it be complete and comprehensive, have the circumstances so changed as to render that a light duty to be discharged in the eight or ten hours which the Secretary of State was gracious and liberal enough to accord to us? I say, Sir, has it now become a light and easy duty to settle this question which, eighteen years ago, would have required a whole Session to settle in a satisfactory manner? What have the changes been? Why these have been the changes, that we have had introduced, since Confederation, the Province of Prince Edward Island, the



Province of British Columbia, the Province of Manitoba, and have pressing upon our hands, with an urgency which the hon. gentlemen opposite do not realize, the necessity of representation for the North-West Territories of Canada. I say, Sir, that you have got four questions on your hands, one of which you neglect for the moment, and three of which you acknowledge are to be dealt with in addition to the questions which you had to consider in the year 1867, when your Reform Bill was going to engage the attention of the House for an entire Session. No man can deny that one of the questions involved in the statement of a franchise for Canada is the condition of the people, the state of public opinion, and the actual results of the existing franchises in each Province of Canada. At the time the hon. gentleman said that such a measure would properly occupy the attention of an entire Session, we had to deal with it uncomplicated by the fact that there was as there now is a variety of franchise between Ontario and Quebec. They had had a common franchise, and we had therefore to consider only one franchise for the two great Provinces of the Dominion, and separate franchises for the two important Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. You had to deal, therefore, with these three different franchises, and perhaps, not very remote from one another, although containing divergencies which we found, when the hon. gentleman did bring down his Bill, were important obstacles to its success. But even these are in a different position to-day, because the franchises of Ontario and Quebec have diverged; and to-day you have to deal, so far as the old Provinces are concerned, with four franchises instead of three, with four conditions of public opinion, with four conditions of public life, instead of three; and in addition to that, you have to deal with the condition of the other Provinces. It is quite true that they are only small Provinces, as the Secretary of State observed—hardly worth while talking about, probably, hardly worth while considering as to their feelings. They

are little Provinces and they should not obtrude themselves very much into this discussion. Of course not. But still, let us give them a little space. Because we are so strong, because we are so powerful, let us be a little generous, if justice, even, does not require it—and consider a little the smaller Provinces. We have to consider them; we must consider them; and the consideration of them, even of that other one which it was at that time hoped to introduce into the Union, the colony of Newfoundland, was shown, many years ago, to be a very important obstacle to the hon. gentleman's proposal. I say, then, that instead of the difficulties and complexities which necessarily attend the attempt to frame a franchise for the Dominion of Canada, based upon those considerations on which this franchise is based, having diminished by time, they have increased by time. The area is larger; the franchises are more numerous and divergent, and the people have been accustomed for eighteen years, and at five general and as many or more local elections, to recognise that they have a common franchise for both Dominion and local elections. It has become their use and wont, their common experience; and these certainly are considerations which do not diminish, but largely increase the complexity and the difficulty of creating and forging in this Parliament a complete and comprehensive measure for a common franchise. I repeat, then, that if, in the year 1867, the Bill was not even brought forward, because a complete and comprehensive Reform Bill would properly occupy the attention of an entire Session, these words apply with infinitely added force to the consideration of such a measure at this time and under these circumstances. How do these words, then, comport with the eight or ten hours which, we are told, we shall be allowed in discussing it? Now, Sir, in the year 1869 we were informed by the Speech from the Throne that:

"Bills will be presented to you for the establishment of uniform and amended laws respecting Parliamentary elections."

And the promise of the previous Session, and the promise of that Session, were fulfilled by the presentation of a Bill during that Session. That Bill was presented on the 18th May, 1869, and the order for the second reading was discharged on the 19th June, 1869. At that time the hon. gentleman adopted a different mode for the preparation and revision of the lists from that which he has now adopted, and he made a statement of the principles of the Franchise Bill which contrast somewhat with the principles which have been announced to-day. But I shall not at this moment trouble the House with those references. I wish to continue the historical narrative of the adventures of the Conservative Government of Canada in search of a Franchise Bill. In the year 1870 the Speech from the Throne was more comprehensive :

"The laws in force on the subject of the elective franchise and the regulation of parliamentary elections in the several Provinces of the Dominion vary very much in their operations, and it is important that a uniform provision should be made, settling the franchise and regulating elections to the House of Commons, and measures upon these subjects will be submitted to your consideration."

Now, Sir, growing bold by time, and having decided to set their hands to the work, a statement of the importance and urgency of the measure was introduced into the Speech. We were told that uniformity was the difficulty; that this want of uniformity was a blemish. It offended hon. gentlemen opposite. They did not like it. It is not the assertion of our power, of our prestige, it is not the badge of our humiliation, while we are elected to this House by a suffrage which is prescribed by the Local Legislatures for the election of members to their own Assemblies that is noted; but the need of a uniform franchise. That is the ground taken. I mark, and I ask the House to mark, the ground that is taken. The ground that is taken is the variation, the differences, that exists in the laws in force in the various Provinces. The

laws vary much in their operation. What follows?

"It is important that a uniform provision should be made, settling the franchise and regulating elections."

It is as apostles of the great doctrine of uniformity, it is as exponents of the necessity of a uniform provision, that the right hon. gentleman induced his colleagues to come forward when they, for the third time, in the Speech from the Throne, announced such a measure. The House met on 15th February, and the hon. gentleman then felt, contrary to the view of to-day, that he ought, if he was going to carry his Bill, to introduce it early. When did he present it? He presented it on the 24th February, nine days after the House had convened. Thus he did, so far as time was concerned, offer the House the Session. But, of course there was other legislative work to be done. He moved the second reading on 10th March. The debate was then adjourned. It was resumed on 18th March, and it was then adjourned. It was resumed again on 24th March, upon which occasion the Bill was read the second time and ordered to be committed. It was committed on 29th March, and progress was reported. It was considered in committee twice subsequently, and as the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Laurier) has pointed out, upon the assertion in the committee of the counter-proposition by Sir A. A. Dorion, that the provincial franchises should be used, discussion in committee closed on 3rd May, and the hon. gentleman moved the discharge of the order. Did the hon. gentleman then, when he brought forward the Bill, obviously with the intention of passing it through the House, adopt the pleasant and graceful mode of deciding upon what is adequate discussion and limiting that discussion, as is proposed by the Secretary of State? No. What the hon. gentleman said on the 10th of March, when he moved the second reading of the Bill, was this: "He would have this Bill placed on the paper every Government day, and consider in



*extenso* whenever opportunity offered. This would probably last till near the end of the Session." And he went on to explain that the discussion would continue till very near to the end of the Session; as, no doubt, the Senate would not interfere with the Bill, it being a Bill respecting elections for the House of Commons. When he made that proposition to the House, to read the Bill the second time on the 10th March, the hon. gentleman thought that the Committee of the Whole would continue until nearly the end of the Session before the Bill would be thoroughly, exhaustively and satisfactorily discussed. How far that accords with one whole day, how far that accords with eight or ten hours for a discussion of a Franchise Bill, I leave the House to judge. Well, as I have said, the hon. gentleman failed of his effort. I pass on to enquire how it happened that, if this measure be not, in its character and in its provisions, complicated, difficult and extensive, that for three successive Sessions it should be promoted—not brought in the first time, because it would take the whole Session to deal with it; brought in the second time and the order discharged; brought in the third, early; debated in the House and in the committee for seven full days, and then dropped from the Order paper and the order discharged. These are not the signs of an easy Bill; these are not the signs of a simple Bill; these are not the signs of a popular Bill; these are not the signs of a Bill which public opinion was demanding. These are the signs of one mind and one will animating the Government and pushing on, as far as he could and as fast as he could, as far as he dare, in the direction which he was determined to go, and postponing it at one time without action being taken on it at all, postponing it the second time after he had introduced the Bill, postponing it the third time after he had challenged debate upon it, because he found his measure did not receive that support from his own followers which was necessary in order to its being

carried. These are the signs which mark the progress of the adventures of the hon. gentleman in search of a Franchise Bill for the first three years of his reign. In 1871 the Speech from the Throne announced to us among other measures, that a Bill would be presented relating to parliamentary elections. But the only Bill that was presented was a Bill to make temporary provision for the election of members, and this easy, simple, popular and pressing subject was not even mentioned on that occasion. Then, in 1872, there was an announcement in the Speech from the Throne that the decennial census had taken place and that the duty of readjusting the representation in Parliament for the four Provinces would devolve upon Parliament, and a measure for that purpose would be submitted. So that while the subject of the representation of the people in Parliament was to attract attention on that occasion, too, the hon. gentleman had abandoned for the time, it appeared, the idea of pressing upon Parliament and upon the country a uniform franchise. He succeeded in obtaining a majority in the elections of 1872; and having succeeded, he renewed his efforts in this direction in 1873. The Speech from the Throne in that year makes this declaration:

"It is important that provision should be made for the consolidation and amendment of the laws now in force in the several Provinces, relating to the representation of the people in Parliament. A measure for this purpose, and one for the trial of controverted elections, will be submitted for your consideration."

The House met upon the 6th March. The Bill respecting the election of members was introduced on the 21st March, very shortly after the commencement of the Session, though not quite so rapidly as upon the occasion in 1870. The order for the second reading was discharged on 20th May. A temporary Election Bill was introduced on the 15th May, and read the second and third time on 20th May. Hon. members will see the progress made during that Session in the discharge of this easy, simple

and popular duty. Then there came, as some of us still remember, a second Session in 1873. We had, in that year, two Sessions of Parliament. We met here in the fall of the year, and though some of us had supposed that we met for the simple purpose of passing judgment upon an arraigned Administration, and deciding whether they should retain the confidence of the House and the country, yet their view was that there were general legislative duties to be performed; and pressed as the hon. gentleman was by many and urgent considerations of another character, that sense of duty, that earnest persistence in the discharge of what is right, that constant attention to the interests of the public which he has displayed through his career, induced him, even under those pressing circumstances, when his thoughts might be—when it is no undue reflection to assume they were—largely engaged in another quarter, to act; he felt even then that still this question, so dear to his heart, must not be forgotten, and the Speech from the Throne, even in the fall Session of 1873, contained the old announcement, that a Bill for the consolidation and amendment of the laws in force in the several Provinces, relating to the representation of the people in Parliament, was to be again submitted. The Speech from the Throne added:

“By the postponement of this measure from last Session, you will have the advantage of including in its provisions the Province of Prince Edward Island, now happily united to Canada.”

Well, we did not happen to have that opportunity. Circumstances over which the hon. gentleman had no control prevented him from redeeming the pledge which he advised His Excellency to put in the Speech from the Throne on that occasion, and instead of such answer as he had hoped would be given by the House to that Speech, an answer was proposed by my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie), which, after several days of debate, the hon. gentleman found he could not resist, but which he

did not want to see pass, and consequently he retired from office, and I do not blame him for not having brought down a Representation Bill in the second Session of 1873. The hon. gentlemen, being relieved for a time by an ungrateful country and an ungrateful House of Commons from the cares of State, was no longer charged in heart, in conscience and in brain, with the great responsibility of making uniform election laws for Canada; and my hon. friend who succeeded him, and who took a different view of his duty to the country in reference to the policy of Administrations on the occasion of a general election, propounded his policy on that subject. My hon. friend did what the hon. gentleman does not do—he issued an address to his electors, and he declared his opinion to be—in that address, I think, but certainly in his public speeches, as the leader of his party—in favor of the provincial franchises as the rule for elections to this House, and having so declared—not as to all the details of the measure, which of course could not and ought not to be, because they would be ineffectually submitted to the people—but generally the principles on which in that and other particulars in which he invited the discussion of the people he proposed to conduct public affairs. My hon. friend was returned to power in January, 1874; and true to his pledge he introduced his Bill and asked the Parliament of Canada to consecrate the principle for which he had been contending, namely, that the franchises which the Provincial Legislatures adopted for the Legislative Assemblies should be the franchise for the election of members to this House. But in the course of the preliminary discussion on the debate on the Address, my hon. friend was subjected to some very severe criticism by the right hon. gentleman for his improper conduct. He was told that he had been guilty of an act contrary to the principles of the British constitution, that he had been guilty of an act which assimilated this country more to the rule which sometimes prevailed in France, under its Re-



publican institutions, of a plebiscite—to Cæsarism, and so on, because my hon. friend thought fit to tell the people of Canada, when he was appealing to them for their suffrages, the general principles on which he proposed to conduct public affairs; because my hon. friend had thought fit to say these and such are the measure which I intend, if you give me power, to ask the Legislature to adopt—because my hon. friend had frankly stated what things he would do if he were given power, and asked the people to exercise an intelligent judgment upon them, the hon. gentleman rebuked him most severely and said that, although my hon. friend had a precedent, although he had the precedent of Mr. Gladstone, who, on a late occasion, had taken the people into his confidence, yet the weekly newspapers had condemned Mr. Gladstone, and had found out that he was guilty of an act in England, as my hon. friend was guilty of an act in Canada, subversive of the principles of the British constitution. The people should have been left in the dark, their return should have been a question of confidence, and my hon. friend should have been quite free to decide what measures to bring down, unfettered and untrammelled by the judgment of the people beforehand, as to the principles on which he should rule if they allowed him to rule. The statement my hon. friend made had several advantages; it had the advantage that the people returned that House with the knowledge that a Bill, based on the lines of a recognition of the Provincial franchises, would be the result, and it was after that plain statement of policy that my hon. friend received the endorsement which gave him power to put the existing law on the Statute Book. Then, Sir, that Bill was very fully discussed, and it passed a second reading without a division. But in the course of a discussion in committee the right hon. gentleman felt so strongly on the importance of keeping free from all influences those who would have the revision of the voters' lists that, when an hon. member of the House said he did not see

any reason why the county judges should not have a vote, the present First Minister pointed out, as a reason against their having the right to vote, that they revised the voters' list. Oh! he said, the county court judges revise the voters' lists, and that is the reason why they should not have the right to vote. Such were the pure, not to say the purest principles—I do not object to them; I think they were right—such were the principles upon which the hon. gentleman was disposed to deal at that time.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

#### AFTER RECESS.

MR. BLAKE. I had pointed out, Mr. Speaker, before you left the Chair, that a settlement of this question was made in 1874, under the Administration of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie), and that during the continuance of that Parliament, during all its five Sessions, no proposal was made by hon. gentlemen opposite, then in Opposition, in contravention of that settlement or for the application of the principles which, in opposition to that settlement, they deemed to be right; that they made no proposal to challenge the attention of the House and the country upon the question whether it was fitting that their views should prevail at the election which was getting nearer every Session. They went to the country, and the hon. gentleman whispered, so far as I have heard, no word of dissatisfaction with the arrangement of the franchise. Certainly, it cannot have been said to have been an issue before the electors in the year 1878. The hon. gentleman then triumphed at the polls; he resumed office; he held it for a period, not the full term, but the period for which he thought fit to allow that Parliament to exist, from 1878 to 1882; he appeared to have abandoned his proposals; he did not bring them to the consideration of the Legislature; he did not even adorn a Speech from the Throne, as far as I know, in any of these four Sessions, with any such proposal. He dissolved the Legislature; in appealing to the country he did not express any dissatis-

faction with the condition under which the people were called on to exercise the franchise. He could not do so, because for four years he had controlled the administration of affairs with a very large majority in Parliament, and during those four years he had been oblivious of his former views on this subject; he had made no attempt even to press the question upon the consideration of the Legislature. He went to the country upon other issues, not averring that he was about to introduce this change, not averring that there was any cause for dissatisfaction, not indicating this as a question to be at all considered by the electors. He succeeded, and the first proof of his success was the re-introduction of this proposal in the Speech from the Throne in 1883; so that for two Parliaments the question had been settled; it had been settled in the first Session of the earlier Parliament by my hon. friend (Mr. Mackenzie) and had never been challenged since that time, although for a whole Parliament the hon. gentleman opposite (Sir John A. Macdonald) had the means, if he chose, had the power, if he willed, to have redressed this anomaly which grieves his soul so much; to have put upon a sound footing the principles of the franchise for this House, which, he says, have been false all this time; to have made accordant with the spirit of our constitution a practice which, he says, has been discordant all this time. In 1883 he brought the question under our consideration. He announced then:

"It is important that the laws relating to the representation of the people in Parliament should be amended, and the electoral franchises in the existing Provinces assimilated. And measures for this purpose will be submitted for your consideration."

The House met on the 8th February; the Bill was read the first time the 13th April, and the order was discharged the 13th May, the Bill never having gone to a second reading; but upon the presentation of the Bill the hon gentleman said:

"The principle is not the principle which we have heard stated to-day, which was that this Parliament should control the franchise,

but that the franchise shall be uniform throughout the Dominion, so that the same classes shall have the franchise in the different Provinces. So far as Ontario and Quebec are concerned, the Bill will operate, on the whole, as an enlargement of the franchise. It will affect other Provinces variously, according to the principles on which their various present franchises are framed."

So that once again you find the principle of uniformity consecrated as the essential principle of the Dominion franchise. He also made an observation or two in reference to other clauses of the Bill at that time, to which I shall not now refer. In 1884 the Speech from the Throne again contained the statement:

"The Bill laid before you last Session, for the representation of the people in Parliament and the assimilation of the electoral franchises existing in the several Provinces, has now been before the country for a year. The measure has been introduced and I commend it to your attention."

The House met the 17th January, the hon. gentleman presented the Bill the 23rd January, a week after the House had met. But that diligence was not followed by equal diligence in pressing the Bill, for the order was discharged the 16th April, there having been no attempt to press the Bill to a second reading at all. Now, having framed his Bill in the first Session of this present Parliament, having introduced it at a comparatively advanced period of that Session, having brought it forward in the second Session of Parliament, having introduced it within a week from the opening of that Session, I should like to know what excuse there is, when this third Session we are met in the Speech from the Throne with the announcement that this measure will be brought forward, for the late period in which it is brought forward. If he intended to press it for settlement, after the statement to which I referred as to the length of time it would take for proper consideration, if he was able, at the opening of last Session, to bring down this measure, how is it that so many weeks have elapsed before he brought it forward, this Session?



And yet he declares he intended to bring it forward, with a view of bringing it to a final conclusion. After all that has occurred on this subject during the past eighteen years, particularly after the early presentation of the Bill last Session, we had a right to conclude, when the hon. gentleman brought it forward so late this Session, that his intention was simply so far to fulfil this promise made in the Speech from the Throne that he would bring down such a measure, but that he had no intention to press it to a conclusion. And the reason given for pressing it to a conclusion to-day, the reason given for its being an opportune time for establishing this change, is that there are alterations in the franchise lately made in more than one Local Legislature. Now, I have pointed out that there was no announcement by the hon. gentleman of his declination to accede, to assent to the settlement of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie) as to the terms of settlement of the principle on which our franchise should be framed. There was no request on his part for the confidence of the people, either at the election of 1878 or the election of 1882, on the score that he would effect a reform of this description. There was no challenge of the existing system and of the verdict of 1874 upon that system, or of the legislation based upon that verdict. I think there should have been such a challenge; I think there should have been such an opportunity for discussion before the electorate of this country, if the hon. gentleman intended to propose such a measure. From his own point of view it is a most important measure, it is a vital measure; it involves a fundamental difference of principle compared with the law of the land; and I say that when a question, with reference to the representation of the people in Parliament, proposing vital and fundamental changes of principle, is brought forward, it ought to be brought forward after the people have had an opportunity of deciding, at a general election, by the representatives they are to return, what shall be the

general policy which shall regulate the legislation upon that subject. What has happened in England, with reference to the Reform Bills? We know the Reform Bills there have been adopted after long discussion; that for Session after Session those who have been in the minority, and sometimes even Governments who, on other questions, have had a majority, have made proposals, but that the measure has ripened by that good and wholesome process of discussion out of doos and of election after election held upon it, until the results are obtained. That is the great advantage of that principle, the general principle which has distinguished English legislation, the principle of progressive advance, the principle of stability, the principle that, as a rule, a settlement of a great question of this kind is irrevocable. Why is it irrevocable as a rule? Not because the people cannot change it, but because it is not made the law unless and until, by discussion and popular elections upon it, it is certain that the people have settled down to the adoption of that rule, not in some hasty fashion, but after mature thought and reflection, and after careful argument and discussion; and I maintain that the view to which I have referred and which I know is very much opposed by the right hon. gentleman, which I have already pointed out he reprehended in the case of my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie), when he said he acted not in accordance with the spirit of the British constitution, because he told the people the general principles upon which he asked their confidence is the true Democratic view, the view on which, consistently with the principles of representative government, as opposed to the *plébiscite*, you yet may give an ever-increasing measure of interest in, and control over, the legislation of the country to the great body of the electors. You give it to them when you recognise the view that they are to be consulted upon the general principles of legislation—not by a mere yea and nay vote, but by their fairly understanding what the large and fund-

amental questions are to be, as far as they can be anticipated, with which the Parliament they are electing is to deal, and what the general principles held by the competitors for their confidence are upon those large and fundamental questions. I do not deny that there will arise, that there may arise, in the currency of any Parliament, very grave questions, unanticipated in the election. I do not seek to shackle the authority of Parliament to deal with those emergent questions which may arise. But this is not an emergent question of that kind. For this, no such excuse exists. This is a question which we supposed to be settled, which we supposed was laid to sleep after the legislation of my hon. friend in 1874, and on which, if the decision of Parliament and the people was to have been challenged, it ought to have been challenged by the hon. gentleman before he went to the polls, on which he ought to have asked for the return of a Parliament of opinions contrary to those held by that which was elected when the people previously pronounced upon it. Under these circumstances, I maintain that we are entitled to say that there has not been that popular discussion as to the reversal of the views held in 1874 and since, that there has not been that opportunity for consideration by the people which, at this age and under our Democratic system of Government, there ought to have been. I do not intend to say a word more than that which I have said generally, by my reference to former utterances, as to the period of the Session at which the Bill is introduced, and as to the possibility of dealing with the Bill as it ought to be dealt with, consistently with the discharge of our other business. The House has decided, by a very large majority, that it can fully discuss and deal with this Bill, and also with all the other pressing legislation which is upon the Order paper and which, though not upon the Order paper, is expected to come upon the Order paper after a little while. The House has so decided, and we are therefore to proceed to that discussion;

but I do maintain that the observations of the hon. gentleman which I have read, his course of conduct in the past, and his professions in the past, sufficiently indicate that this Bill ought to receive a very considerable amount of discussion. If that is to be to the detriment of the discussion which is to take place on other measures, the hon. gentleman will obtain that advantage from this procedure which he has often in the past obtained from a similar procedure, in regard to other important measures, and which was reprehended by his independent supporter from Northumberland, N. B. (Mr. Mitchell), the other evening—the procedure of procrastinating the submission of his measures to the House, in the hope that the late period of their introduction might induce us, a busy people, a people dependent upon our own exertions for our maintenance, to curtail the debates, in order that we might be able to enter upon the discharge of our private duties. I trust that such will not be the case now. I have said that, for eighteen years, we have gone on under the provincial franchises, and why should we not continue to go on under the provincial franchises? We are a practical people, and our politics, in this particular as in others, must be practical. You know that your franchise is not an artistic franchise, that no franchise that is proposed will fully satisfy the demands of logic and reason. You say it is the best that can be done; it may not please all the Provinces; we hope it will please most of the Provinces, or the larger Provinces, or the majority of the House. That is all that we can expect. But I ask where are the practical inconveniences which have resulted from the operation of the existing system? What difficulty have we found? Do hon. gentleman opposite say that the elections under the provincial franchises have not truly exhibited the popular mind? We know there are defects in all our electoral systems, defects which have affected the composition of this House, which have prevented its being a reflection of the popular will to so great an



extent as, according to my notion, representative Houses ought to be. But I say these defects are not traceable and cannot be traced to the franchise. They are traceable to other causes altogether ; and therefore I say that the experience of eighteen years and of five general and a very large number of special elections is valuable to us and ought not to be lightly thrown aside ; and, if, for these eighteen years, we have lived without our prestige being dulled or diminished, without practical inconvenience, without its being possible to allege that the operation of the law, as it has stood for that time, has prevented the popular will from being reflected here to any extent to which it would have been reflected by any change in the franchise, if I say we are able to appeal to these results, we have a very strong argument for not disturbing the existing state of things. You may say it is rather a Conservative argument ; but, although I am and avow myself a Reformer, and a radical Reformer, I have never been disposed to favor change for the mere sake of change, and I am disposed to pay very great respect, in a constitution like ours and in a system like ours, to the practical teachings of experience ; I am disposed to acknowledge the merits of a system which has proved itself adequate to the occasion and to whose working which we are accustomed. I say then, that those who, at this time of day, propose a change, are bound to get beyond theoretic difficulties, are bound to get beyond alleged errors of principle, and to show us wherein a practical wrong is being done, a practical evil is being incurred, of some considerable extent, and I go further, of an extent which is not more than counterbalanced by the practical advantages of continuing the present plan. But I go much further yet. Ours is a federal system, its basis is the federal principle, and this basis of our system, although not a perfect federation, yet as a federal constitution, is representation in the popular Chamber, according to the population of each Province. There is the base. Your fundamental principle

is that in the Commons House of Parliament each Province shall be represented by so many members as the population of that Province is, in proportion to those of the other Provinces. It is provincial representation, therefore. It is representation of the Province ; it is the popular opinion of the Province, according to its strength, counted by the numbers of the people ; that is the base of our federal system. In the other Chamber there is a recognition, in a peculiar and somewhat marred form, of the principle of State sovereignty, with regard to which the numbers of the Senators are based. But here the principle of provincial representation is recognised in its entirety, and if that be so, I say that it is more in accordance with the true theory, it is more in accordance with the real spirit, of the federal principle, that the people of the Province should decide what is the best mode in which the sense of the Province can be taken as to the public opinion to be represented on the floor of this House. It is the people of the Province, in proportion to their numbers, that are to be represented here ; it is the people of the Province, I say, who should tell you in what shape your representation is to take place. Now, I do not argue that the constitution says this in imperative terms. If I could say so the question would be at an end. We would not have the power to do this thing. Of course, it is admitted that we have the power to do this thing ; but we have many powers which we are bound to exercise, if the federal constitution is to be preserved, with due regard to the spirit and the principle of federalism. You have got the power of disallowance ; you can disallow every act of a Provincial Legislature. Will you exercise it ? No. Why will you not exercise it ? Because you know it would be destructive of the federal principle altogether. You know that some line and some measure must be laid down, and some conditions framed as to the extent of it. It is a question between parties what the extent of it should be, but it is admitted by both

parties that some line and some limit should be laid down, and that these are to be found in the recognition, more or less perfect and large, of the federal principle. Some may say we do not choose to recognise the federal principle so widely as you do, and therefore we will assume a more wide exercise of the power of disallowance. Others will say: We recognise the federal principle more widely than you do; therefore we insist a narrower exercise of the power of disallowance. But in either case the test to be applied is: What is the true limit of the federal principle? So I might say of many other things. I maintain that this constitution, in those regards which this Parliament and the Local Legislature have powers, is to be worked by both, if it is to last, with a due regard to its spirit, which is the federal spirit. And therefore I say that it is not incumbent upon us to exercise all our powers, that when we are entitled to act in any given phase of legislative action, we are not bound to act because we are entitled to act. But we have acted, and how have we acted? We acted in 1874 by saying that we adopted the provincial franchises. Now, we still have power, if we find that the Local Legislature abuses its trust, if we find that what has been suggested from the other side to-day has really taken place—I deny that it has taken place at all, to my knowledge and information—but if there has been some abuse of trust, we have a remedy, and we have it always in our hands. But I maintain that there has been no such abuse of trust, there has been no such abuse of power; and if there has been, let the remedy to be applied be limited to the evil to be cured, and do not assume an entire and absolute power and control because there has been a partial abuse of power, which you can remedy by the proper and specific application to that abuse. I have said that this principle of a Province establishing a franchise for itself by which the representation in this Parliament shall be governed is the true federal principle. And besides the argument drawn from

reason, we may draw the argument from experience. The right hon. gentleman opposite, has more than once paid a generous and not undeserved compliment to the constitution of the neighboring Republic. He has more than once pointed out the wisdom with which that constitution was framed, and eulogised the great men who set their hands to that great work. It is true that those laudations were, perhaps, indirectly laudations of the speaker, because he has always contended that, great as was their ability, large their power, of statesmanship, and far-seeing their intellects, he has done better yet. He has contended that the constitution under which we live is a better constitution than theirs, and will do better work. But I say that upon this question of what the true spirit of the federal principle demands, as to the mode in which the people of each Province shall be represented in the general Legislature, you have got, besides the reason and the theory, the practice and the experience of the great Republic the largest and on all hands the most glorious application of the federal principle which has yet been known to the world. And you do not find there that uniformity is so much admired. You find there that the basis of representation for Congress is the basis of the franchise in each State for the most numerous body of its Local Legislature. And therefore we have, as I have said, besides our own experience, the experience and the practice of the United States in this regard; we have the theory and the reason of the thing all pointing one way. I deny that uniformity is so charming as the hon gentleman declares. I deny that uniformity is essential. I aver on the contrary, that a nominal uniformity has been proved to be, in the condition of our country, substantial diversity. I aver that the conditions of our people differ, that the circumstances differ, and the only way in which the hon. gentleman has ever been able, in any sense, to grapple with this phase of the subject, has been by laying down a rule and measure to satisfy the aspirations of none, because



he was obliged to give and take something in order to make it tolerable to all. Now this difficulty is shown in the proposals that have been made from time to time. The truth is that the opinions of the Provinces on this topic differ. The hon. Secretary of State, this evening, in one part of his argument, announced that the opinion of the Province of Quebec was hostile to one disposition of this Bill, and that seemed to him to be a very good reason for its not being pressed. I dare say it was a good reason for its not being pressed, but is not the admission fatal to the proposition, we ought to have a federal franchise at all? Why should we not have a franchise that will suit the Province of Quebec, expressing, according to the mind of that Province, the opinion of the people in this Parliament? You want, for the Province of Quebec, just such a franchise as shall best express the mind of that Province on this floor. Who are to be the judges of what sort of franchise will best accomplish that result in the Province of Quebec? Not the people of Ontario; not the people of British Columbia; not the people of Prince Edward Island. The people of the Province of Quebec will best judge it. It is the people of the Province of Quebec, knowing their position, knowing their circumstances, knowing their conditions, knowing, if you will—for they have them, like the rest of us, their sentiments, passions and prejudices—knowing the state of public opinion amongst themselves, that can best judge for themselves what franchise will produce the desired result of representing upon this floor, fully and completely, the mind of that Province. And these will be the results achieved by those who are most deeply interested in the achieving of the result, and who have the best knowledge and the best means of achieving the result. The hon gentleman acknowledged that the opinions of the Provinces differ. He has referred to one provision of the Bill that is to be dealt with specially in consequence of that difference. We know it also. We know that the people of Prince Edward Island have prac-

tically manhood suffrage; that British Columbia has manhood suffrage; that Manitoba has practically manhood suffrage; and, thus as we know, public opinion differs in a very marked degree in those Provinces from that which obtains in the other Provinces. The Province of Ontario has an enlarged franchise. The right hon. gentlemen stated that the general effect of his Bill would be to enlarge the franchise in Ontario. The right hon. gentleman was repeating his speech of a year or two ago. A year or two ago that speech was, to a certain extent, true; but it is entirely inaccurate to-day. It has to-day no foundation in fact whatever. The franchise in Ontario is to be very largely restricted by this measure. That is an important consideration for us. You find that done. How was it done? Both parties in that Province—and the parties in that Province are composed of the same men, thinking the same thoughts as those who compose the people who send us here—were agreed that its condition and circumstances were, that an extension of the franchise was desirable. The right hon. gentleman, in his capacity of a provincial politician, himself adopted that view; and, at a party political convention, which was held under his auspices, in the Province of Ontario, resolutions were passed in favor of an extension of the suffrage in that Province. The Local Government pledged themselves to that extension, and they went to the people upon that extension; and, having been returned to power, they proceeded to put into execution their pledges, and they passed an Act of the Legislature. What is the state of public opinion in Ontario on this subject? Why, it is this, that the Liberals have passed a Bill, a very much more liberal measure than that which is now before us, and the hon. gentleman's deputy in that Legislature, Mr. Meredith, on behalf of the Ontario Conservatives, moved an amendment, practically in favor of manhood suffrage. So the opinion of the great Province of Ontario is represented, save in so far as it is divided by a suggestion on the part of

the minority, the Conservative minority, that manhood suffrage should be the franchise—by unanimous agreement as to the liberal franchise to which I am about to refer. There is no dispute in Ontario that the franchise should not be at least as liberal as the provisions to which I am now referring. The question which the Conservatives raised, was that the Bill was not liberal enough, and that it should have gone down to manhood suffrage. If that statement of the political opinion of Ontario, is correct on the subject of the franchise, I want to see how the provisions of the respective Bills contrast. In Ontario, in cities and towns, the qualification of owners is \$200, in incorporated villages and townships, it is \$100 only. In this Bill it is \$300 in cities and towns, and in townships \$150. So you find that the qualifications are very different. You find that the franchise which both parties have united upon in Ontario is very much lower than the franchise proposed by this Bill. Then as to the income franchise. That franchise is \$250 a year in Ontario; under this Bill it is \$400 a year. Then there is the wage-earners' franchise. The hon. gentleman has adopted practically the language of his former Bill, as well as I remember it, with respect to the income franchise, and he explained in his former speech on the subject, his speech in 1870, what he intended the effect to be. He said, with respect to the provision, that parties having an annual income of \$400 should have a vote, that it did not apply to day laborers, who might, as a matter of fact, earn \$400 in a year. It is not the intention of the Bill, he said, to give votes to such parties, because they have no abiding interest in the country. That was the statement: the franchise was not to apply to men who earned their daily bread by day labor, because they had no abiding interest in the country. And even, although such a man might earn \$400 in a year, he was not to have the franchise. He retained the same provision in the present Bill. But in the Province of Ontario, besides an income

franchise of \$250, there is a wage-earners' franchise. It is provided that every male person entered on the last assessment roll, and who is a resident at the time of election and has resided there continuously since the completion of the last roll and during the twelve months immediately preceding, being an earner of wages to the amount of not less than \$250 in a year, shall be entitled to vote. It is further provided that in estimating or ascertaining the amount of wages or income, the fair value of board or lodging received in lieu of wages shall be considered and included. Those are provisions of the franchise in Ontario. But hon. gentlemen opposite, the great friends of the workingmen, the great friends of the wage-earners of the country, who poured forth floods of tears for years while in Opposition, as to their unhappy fate, and who have poured forth more lately floods of congratulation and jubilation over the improvement which, they say, they have effected in their condition—those hon. gentlemen told us, in 1870, that the day laborers should not have the franchise, and in 1885 they give an income franchise of \$400, but provide no wage-earners' franchise at all. Then there is the householder's franchise, which is a very important franchise. Every householder is entitled to vote, without regard to the value of the house. Then there is the land-owner's franchise. The son of a landlord is entitled to vote, entirely independent of the value of the land-owner's property. If a land-owner has enough to qualify himself, his son or sons shall be qualified also, so that the restrictions in this Bill in that regard do not exist in the Ontario law. Such is the Act which has been adopted unanimously by the Legislature of Ontario as the best means of obtaining representation of the minds of the people of the Province, except that the Conservative party wish the franchise to be placed still lower, because the Conservative party say it should be still more liberal. They are all agreed it should be that far down, and how, with that state of things, the hon. gentleman could tell



us that his proposal enlarges the Ontario franchise, I am really unable to understand. I shall not then engage in a discussion of its effect upon the other Provinces. I mention its effect in the Province of Ontario, as I happen to come from that Province, and as the hon. gentleman in so extraordinary a way misconceived the operation of the present law in that Province. But I observe that within a little time a measure has been introduced in the Legislature of Nova Scotia, which has the effect of liberalising the franchise in that Province also. Now, Sir, the First Minister declared that our present plan was, as he said, anomalous for us, drawing as we did our inspiration from British institutions, and it was contrary to the first principles of British institutions. Sir, we draw our inspiration from British institutions in so far as British institutions are consonant with ours. The British parliamentary institution is a legislative union, not a federal union, and ours must be modified by whatever elements exist in the spirit of federalism different from those which subsist in the spirit of legislative union. This question could not possibly arise under a legislative union. There you are dealing with one country, with no Local Legislatures, with no local authorities whom anybody proposes to entrust with the power of fixing franchise at all! How else could you fix it, except by the Central Legislature? There is no other way of doing it; it is a literal, actual union; and yet, even there, as has been pointed out by an hon. member, it is only now, under the recent Acts, that the principle of assimilation has become perfected. Up to the present, since the union of Scotland, since the union of Ireland, the franchises have been different in the United Kingdom, different even in different parts of each Kingdom, so that in practice even there, in a legislative union, up to now, for these many years, there was not that assimilation which the hon. gentleman has contended for as belonging to the first principle of British institutions, and which, as I have said, if it was the first principle of those

institutions, would not apply at all to a federal union which, is so wholly different. The hon. Secretary of State has said that provincial rights are not in question. Of course there is a sense in which provincial rights are not in question; that is the sense in which I have spoken a while ago, namely, that we have the power, if we choose to exercise it, of framing a franchise of our own. But the hon. gentleman said the members for Quebec were the representatives of Quebec on the floor of this House, and therefore they should establish the franchise for Quebec. True, the franchise for Quebec ought to be established by the members for Quebec; I admit the hon. gentleman's statement. The franchise ought to be established by the members for Quebec, but it ought to be established by the members of Quebec in the Provincial Legislature of Quebec, where they need not be troubled by other members in this House in the discharge of their duty; where they have control even more absolute than that which some of them claim in the deliberations of this Chamber; where they can decide for themselves just what franchise they want, and thus the hon. gentleman's view would be accomplished. But it might happen that the members for Quebec, who, as the hon. gentleman says, are the representatives for the Province of Quebec, might have a franchise forced upon them here by others that they do not like. Why, the hon. gentleman himself, and his colleagues, the Minister of Public Works, and the Acting Minister of Railways, and the Minister of Militia, are engaged at this moment in promoting a measure which is opposed to the feelings of the members for Quebec. They are engaged at this moment in promoting a measure to which the feeling of the members for Quebec is hostile—the provision of this Bill as to woman suffrage. The hon. gentleman says, forsooth, I will not express an opinion upon it. The hon. gentleman need not express an opinion upon it; we know his opinion; do not we see the Bill? Why, he has brought down the Bill; it is the Bill of

the Government; it tells me what his opinion is. What do I care about his word of mouth. We have his bond, his Bill, his Legislative Act; three Speeches from the Throne, three Bills brought down to Parliament declared what is opinion is. We know his opinion. It cannot be that, on a great principle like this, the Bill which these hon. gentlemen have brought forward is not in accordance with their own opinions. It is impossible that they can be resisting this measure. Not even the Secretary of State, whatever his relations to his colleagues, will say that he is resisting a measure which he himself has joined in bringing down and, therefore, we know their opinions, in a parliamentary sense; we know their opinions, though the reasons for those opinions the hon. gentleman does not now propose to give us. Some other day, perhaps, at some more convenient season, we may hear his reasons in support of the vote he is to give in favor of the clause for woman suffrage; but in the meantime I point out that a Government containing amongst its members four members from the Province of Quebec, might bring down to Parliament a Franchise Bill to which the Province of Quebec was hostile, and which Franchise Bill might be forced through this Parliament, notwithstanding that hostility; and thus it would happen that the representatives of the Province of Quebec, who, as the hon. gentleman truly says, represent that Province in this House, might represent it hopelessly—betrayed and misled by their leaders in the Government—they might find themselves in a position in which they could not resist. We do not know, of course, what steps they have taken. We are not acquainted with the precise process of preparation and elaboration by which the First Minister has made his specific declaration as to the attitude of the Government on this particular clause, to which I am just now about further to refer; but I use it for the moment, as an illustration of the ineffective way in which those in that position, from even the powerful

Province of Quebec, may be constrained to act, if you establish the principle that the representation of the Province is to be decided here. The question being asked here, how best the members for the Federal Parliament can be chosen from the Province of Quebec, that question is to be fairly answered in this way—it can be best decided by the Province of Quebec. And what I have said as to the Province of Quebec applies to each of the other Provinces. I say the question is, how best can the members be chosen to this Parliament, to represent the mind of each Province, and I say it can best be done by the Province which is going to send the members—best be done by the people who are going to elect the members, and if by them, the Local Legislature is the exponent of their views and the representation of their minds. The First Minister said the Local Legislatures might increase or diminish our constituencies. Now, it is not at all proposed that we should call on the Local Legislatures to establish one law and one measure for us and another for themselves. That is not the rule in the United States; it is not the rule here to-day. The rule in the United States has been found a sufficient safeguard, and it is. Whatever you establish for yourselves locally shall be the measure for your representation here. It is not to be supposed that they will hurt themselves locally in order to hurt us here, and what interest can they have in hurting us here anyway? Their object must always be to have as full, as powerful and as fair a representation as is possible. And, mark you, although you speak so contemptuously apparently of Local Legislatures, yet the Local Legislatures are the creation of the same people who send us here; and they speak within their sphere of allotted or assigned power, whether it be assigned under the constitution or limited by our action in this matter, they speak with as good a warrant and with as great a popular sanction from the same electors, and as representing the mind of the same people, as we do who sit in this larger Chamber.



Now, the First Minister a little bit withdrew from his position of uniformity in his speech. Did I perceive a sign of further party action? Did I find a small loophole of retreat from the main basis which has been for these 18 years alleged as the ground of this measure, namely, that we must not have variety, that we must have uniformity, that we must have assimilation, that we must have the same franchise for the different Provinces, when the hon. gentleman said he did not stickle for pedantic uniformity? Does that mean that we are going to have a franchise to suit the people of Prince Edward Island, for them? Or is the later language of the hon. the Secretary of State to prevail, who pointed out that under the present system the smallest Legislatures may be allowed, at will, to change the franchise—that little British Columbia and little Nova Scotia might change our law? Is little Prince Edward Island to change our law as far as she is concerned, because our law, speaking of that as the law of the majority, requires uniformity; and if there is to be variety in the case of one of the Provinces, because one of the Provinces complains of the adoption of the principle of uniformity, the whole business is given up, the whole groundwork of action is gone. You say it is contrary to first principles that there should be variety; you say that you ought to pass a uniform franchise, and if a little Province is to say no, for itself, I want to know why a big one should not. Now, the hon. gentleman said that little Nova Scotia or little British Columbia might change our law, and the First Minister said they could increase or diminish our constituency. But I say again, it is the people of the Province who increase or diminish our constituency; it is the people of the Province that elect the Local Legislature; it is the people of the Provinces that will undo their work for them if it is undone; it is the mind of the people that is represented in the Local Legislature. But the hon. gentleman sneered at the Local Legislatures, as if they were not as

sacred a representation of the popular will, in their sphere, as this Legislature can be in its sphere. The hon. gentleman I say, sneered at these small Provinces.

Mr. CHAPLEAU. I did not.

Mr. BLAKE. Well, his language, I think, was that of sneering; but if the hon. gentleman did not intend it as a sneer, I am glad to know it, and glad to have elicited this expression from the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman, then, not sneering, pointed to the smallness of the Provinces and asked if they wanted to change our law. They do not ask to change it; they want to have a free mind, to say how they shall be represented, each in its own sphere, and each to the extent of its own membership. They do not want to control the deliberations of this Parliament; they do not want to decide how any other Province shall regulate its franchise; each wishes to regulate its own. As I said, the decision which is to be taken in small British Columbia, or in small Nova Scotia, is how the quota for British Columbia or Nova Scotia shall be chosen, and no more than that. The hon. gentleman has said that the constitution does not provide for a local franchise; but that observation I have already answered—I say its spirit does. Then the hon. gentleman referred to the forces of nature, and gave us an elaborate description of those forces; he told us how they operated, and how we ought to apply the great principles, which he seemed to evolve from that discussion, to the present debate. Well, Sir, I think we had not better enter into that large domain. The forces of nature and the laws that rule the world and the creatures therein, are vast and mysterious; they are beyond our ken. We do not apprehend how it happens that the lion and the tiger raven and rend; we do not apprehend the mysteries of the storm and tempest; we do not understand the mysteries of disease and death, of crime and misery; yet they are all parts of a great order, and, as I believe, are susceptible of explanation, though not to our finite minds, as clearly and as consistently with the great harmonies which, we believe, will

be evolved, as these great rules which the hon. gentleman applied; and yet we would not propose to apply them to our legislation or to our action. No, Sir; we cannot dispose of this great question on this broad and mysterious basis which the hon. gentleman evolved; and, entirely agreeing with him in the belief that some day or other the mysteries of those things will be revealed, I decline to acknowledge in the hon. gentleman's argument any practical application which will aid us in the discharge of our duty of to-day. I believe that, notwithstanding lion and tiger, storm and tempest, disease and death, crime and misery, God is good—

“That God which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off, Divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.”

But while I believe that, I do not profess to be able, as the hon. gentleman seems to think he is able, to solve those various mysteries, or to make a practical application of them to the business of a Franchise Bill. Then the hon. gentleman declared—I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon.

Mr. WHITE (Hastings). I say that is great applause, after those beautiful words you have just spoken.

Mr. BLAKE. I may say to the hon. member for North Hastings that I did not expect him to applaud those words; they are not the kind of words he likes. If I were making a speech for his applause, it would be in quite a different tone. The hon. Secretary of State declared that this Bill recognised the progress of the age, that it recognised the fuller right of the people to act in the administration of affairs, and that it gave a larger interest to the people in that direction. Does it so for British Columbia? Does it so for Manitoba? Does it so for Prince Edward Island? Does it so for Ontario? Does it so, in some instances, even for Nova Scotia or New Brunswick? The hon. gentleman will find that these grand sentences, these rounded periods, eloquent though they may be, lack the essential element, I will not say of truth, but of accuracy. As a

rule, and looking over this whole Dominion, whether you count the numbers of the Provinces or the numbers of the population, this Bill, if it recognises the progress of the age, recognises a progress towards a restriction of the franchise instead of its enlargement; it recognises a less right than those rights now belonging to the people to act in public affairs; it recognises and establishes a diminished power from that which now exists under existing legislation. Then the hon. gentleman declared that while the Bill went as far as it was possible to go without universal suffrage, to universal suffrage he was opposed. He denied the franchise to those who had no stake in the country, and he admitted that some of the Provinces might be discontented, but that, he said, was inevitable. They must remember he said that they gave the right to vote to every one who deserved it. That is just the question. The Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and Prince Edward Island have believed, and do believe, that many more people are entitled to the right of franchise than are included in this Bill. Why do you decide that point? Why should you take upon yourselves to determine that those who are now exercising the franchise in those Provinces do not deserve it? The Province of Ontario has, I have said, with unanimity decided that many thousands, aye, many tens of thousands of its citizens, are entitled to the franchise, who, the hon. gentleman says, do not deserve it. But for this Bill they would have it. By this Bill you are going to take it from them. Then the hon. gentleman, giving us some more of the philosophy which he adorns his speeches, says we must choose in practical politics between what is opportune and what is better. Perhaps so; sometimes the hon. gentleman may have so to choose, and I dare say he is an opportunist. But I venture to say to him that you need not now so choose. Why? That which is opportune is, as in the broad sense and in the long run it always is, better too. That which is better is that which is really opportune, and there is concurrence,



and not divergence, between that which is opportune and that which is better. What is both opportune and better is not to disturb the existing system, is to leave this franchise to be regulated as, up to this Session, it has been regulated; and if it were not so, I would venture to say in opposition to the hon. gentleman's doctrine of opportunism, that he had better assume a new *role* and declare himself "too fond of the right to pursue the expedient." But the hon. gentleman said there was a secret reason for the opposition to this measure, and the reason was that some Province wanted to rule this Dominion. I have no idea to what Province he referred, but if there were a way in which some one Province wished it could get the power, and I do not believe anyone can get the power, if there were a way in which one Province could dream for itself it would have the power to control this Dominion, I suppose it would be by declaring that in this Parliament it would regulate the franchise for all the other Provinces; whereas, those who oppose this Bill say: "We do not want, whether we belong to a strong or to a weak Province, to interfere with the Provinces at all; we want each Province to decide for itself, how best its mind will be represented. Is that a desire to centralise? Is that a desire to get power here for some strong Province to rule the Dominion? Is it not rather a desire to leave to the smaller, the weaker Provinces, the fullest measure of self-control in this as in all other matters. It is the hon. gentleman and his followers who, by their policy, want to make the small Provinces bow to the will of the great; it is they who are proposing to do this, and who tell the smaller Provinces, such as Manitoba, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island—small in point of population, though in point of mileage Manitoba and British Columbia outshine a good many of us—it is the who are telling the smaller Provinces: Gentlemen, we insist upon administering to you such a dose of franchise as we think is good for you; it may taste bitter, but it will do you good

afterwards; take it on trust; swallow your medicine! The hon. gentleman defends his course by saying that those who wish to leave each Province to regulate its own franchise are desirous that one Province shall rule. He says we will never build up the country or consolidate the Union on such lines of argument as these; and by an unhappy illustration, he added, we shall never be like the great nation to the south of us. But the United States, the great nation to which the hon. gentleman referred for an illustration, is great, and consolidated in spite of its adopting the very rule the hon. gentleman denounces as fatal to greatness; nay, Sir, it is great and consolidated because of the adopting that rule; it is great and consolidated just because of the great measure of local liberties which it enjoys. I am not now about to enter into a discussion of the arguments advanced sometimes by hon. gentlemen opposite as to the causes which provoked the great war which threatened at one time, in the opinion of some people, to rend the Union asunder. I think I know those causes, having studied them a little. I maintain, in spite of the arguments about State rights, and State sovereignty and all those difficulties, that the principle of wide local liberties is the principle which has made the Union great, which has really consolidated it as a federal union, which has given such an adaptation of local powers and of federal administration as enable it, with its vast territory and enormous population, to regulate its local and general affairs efficiently and harmoniously, and to grow, as that great country is growing, and we are all glad to know that it is growing, in strength and unity as well. And those who hope the brightest hopes, who dreamed the most glorious dreams, who are inspired by the most cauted imaginations, with reference to the future of the land for which we are legislating, those who rejoice in its broad domain, in its immense area of territory, in its diversified interests, are they to forget that it is in this country, above all countries, by

reason and by experience both, that we must preserve to the highest extent the principle of local liberties, if we would indeed accomplish that consummation which we all so devoutly wish—the consolidation of the country into a great nation? We, with our great difficulties, for they are serious, with our great distances, for they are obstacles to centralisation, with our differences of race, our differences of nationality, our sparse populations, surely ought to realise from our reason, and, if not, we ought to learn from the experience of ourselves and of others, how important it is that the principle of local liberties and local administration should prevail. Here I shall not touch upon topics which would be more appropriately touched later, but I am sure no man can reflect upon that which has largely engrossed the mind and thought of the people of Canada and the members of this House for three weeks past, without reflecting upon the importance of local administration, without reflecting upon the difficulties which administration, thousands of miles from the point at which you administer, involves the Government and the country. No person who reflects can doubt that the principle of local franchise and local liberties, applied at an early moment, even at a time when you might not be disposed, otherwise to apply it, is after all the sound and just principle for us; and at this day, in this Parliament, with these events passing before us, we should pause before consummating the act of centralisation which the hon. gentleman has been attempting without success for these last eighteen years. There are great practice advantages in addition to all the considerations to which I have referred, in the retention of the existing law. It is the simplest law you can have. I do not care if the local franchise were, though it be not, so complicated as this one; for practical purposes, the local franchise of the Province is the simplest franchise you can have. Why? Because a double franchise is hard to understand; a double registration is hard to accomplish; the labor of revising lists, of

organising and of electing are all increased. Great confusion is inevitable. Why, in those Provinces, in which a different ballot law prevails, although you have skilled officers, whom you appoint presumably because they are skilled, and are men of intelligence and are men who have had some training in elections, the difficulties and complications which ensue from the mistakes that these men make, because they will apply to a federal election the rules of the local ballot, or to a local election the rules of the federal ballot, are numerous, and they are within the experience of everybody. And, if a man whom you select, presumably because he is an able and efficient man, to whom you send your papers with instructions to study them, who is liable to the penalties of the law if he does not carry it out, if this chosen individual will make mistakes, as all of us know he repeatedly does, and will apply the federal provisions to the local or the local provisions to the federal, what will you say with regard to the ordinary voter, with respect to the provisions of the election law which affect him? I say the greatest confusion will ensue. Now, I want to know whether it is not of the last consequence, to ensure a true representation of the people, that we should have the lists as full as possible, and the people placed thereon with as little trouble and expense as possible, and as little doubt and uncertainty as possible, as to who have the right to be placed on the lists and who have the right to vote? I say that is a practical question of the greatest consequence to those who really value representative government. I say our first care ought to be to place as few obstacles and impediments as possible in the way of the honest man who is entitled to the franchise getting on the voters' list, and as few obstacles as possible in the way of his knowing what he is to do in order to get there; and I say that, if you establish, as you inevitably will establish by your law, one franchise for the local and another for the federal legislature, because you say you are going to establish



one for all the Provinces, and because we know that the conditions and the views of the Provinces vary, you will then establish complications and troubles, a double trouble, a double registration, a double enquiry on the part of the voter, and you will thus create, instead of removing, obstacles towards a full and fair representation of the people. Great expenses will be caused, too. Why, I suppose everybody knows, who has directed any attention to this subject, that it is an expensive matter to keep the voters' lists right, that it is an expensive matter to see that no improper votes are put on, on the one side, and that all proper votes are kept on, on the other side. It is often neglected now; it is often neglected by both parties, and, when an unexpected election takes place, you find sometimes that the real expression of the people's will is thwarted by the circumstance that the lists have not been revised and do not accurately represent their view. Are you going to double all that trouble? Are you going to have two sets of voter's lists to be looked after every year instead of one set? Do you think that is helping the elector on? Do you think that is making easy the path to a real and true representation of the people? It cannot be. It is impossible that those who argue for this Bill can contend for that result. Then there is the expense—the expense to the public in this double registration, the work that has to be done, the printing and revising of a separate set of lists. The local authorities—in my Province, at any rate, I know not whether in the others—provide you a list now; they provide you a printed list; they provide you a revision, a framing of it by the municipal officers elected by the people, a revision by the judicial officers you appoint yourselves, the judicial officers that you appoint here, the county court judges; they give you your list, complete, framed and revised, revised finally by judicial officers appointed by the authority of this Legislature. There is the system. And you are going to take upon yourselves the public expense of framing lists

and printing them yourselves, and you are going to impose the private expense on individuals which is involved in the carrying out of this double franchise. I ask this House not to make the franchise more difficult than it now is, and I say you are making it more difficult, perhaps more than if you raised it, by the practical obstructions you are placing in the way by a double franchise. Make it easier if you can, and the easiest thing you can do is just to leave it alone. Now, if we are to have one franchise for this Dominion, to which I object, unless in so far as the mind of each Province shall from time to time approximate to the same point of view, if we are to have one franchise, I say it does seem to me that the only logical view for a Dominion franchise would be one based on other considerations than those which are stated in this Bill. I give my individual opinions, and I give opinions which I have never proposed to any Legislature to adopt, because I do not believe they are so generally accepted, as yet, that it would be fitting to make them the subject of parliamentary discussion, with a view to parliamentary action, and because I prefer not to force those opinions upon the consideration of any other Province, at any rate, than that in which I have the principal stake, my own. But I say that this Parliament has naught to do with the real property of the country. We do not regulate the civil rights. The laws of descent of property all the laws which affect the holding of property are not ours, and it seems to me that, if you are going to establish a Dominion franchise, which I do not ask you to do, which I oppose your doing, and which I should not propose myself, the basis for that franchise should be citizenship, residence and intelligence—that intelligence established by an easy test, which has been applied in several self-governing states and colonies, the easy test with reference to reading and writing. That, I believe, should be the basis. I have said you have no right to interfere with property and, as to the old British rule,

that representation should depend upon taxation, your system of taxation strikes every man, whether he has real property or not. All of us who live Sir, pay taxes here, and the wage-earner pays very heavy taxes indeed, and therefore in so far as you resort to the old British rule, and if you say no taxation representation, I would like to find the man, who is not a pauper living on public charity, who would not come within that rule in Canada. Now, then, you are proposing a franchise to give a fuller and freer representation, as you say, to the people. Let me call your attention to the operation of the existing franchises, so far as it is possible to understand them from the census. In the Province of Nova Scotia the males over twenty-one, are 1 to 4.12 of the whole population; in New Brunswick, 1 to 4.11; in Quebec, 1 to 4.34; in Ontario, 1 to 4.04. So that there is a slight variation, the Province of Ontario having a larger number of males over twenty-one, in proportion to the population, than any of the other Provinces, but the results being nearly the same. Now, then, the voters on the list in each of the Provinces are, in Ontario, 1 in 4.73 of the population; in Quebec 1 in 5.97; in Nova Scotia, 1 in 6.78; in New Brunswick, 1 in 5.94. Of course that is not an accurate statement, because we know that the voters on the list comprise a very large number of persons who are rated for more than one property; therefore there is an uncertain element which, in the Province of Ontario, exists, perhaps, to a larger extent than in the other Provinces, and would diminish the number of separate voters in proportion to the population. But you observe that there is a fair approximation in all the other Provinces. The franchise for the Province of Ontario is more liberal than the franchise for the other Provinces, and that also in part, and to a large extent accounts, for the circumstance that the voters upon the list number more, in proportion to the population than those in the other Provinces. That being the

state of things, I say that you will not establish uniformity and you will not produce any better result by your change. Let me now look at one of the most important propositions, that to which I alluded a little while ago; look to the question of suffrage for women. Now, you found a marked difference in the language of the First Minister and that of the Secretary of State, with reference to that subject. The hon. Minister of Public Works was wisely silent; he said nothing about it. I do not know what he thought. Perhaps it was because he thought so much that he said so little. But at any rate he has kept a profound silence upon the subject of woman suffrage. The hon. gentleman, however, upon some former occasions, was disposed, I remember, when a little badinage was passing across the House, rather to take credit for the woman suffrage clause. I recollect he alluded to the ladies in the courteous and pleasant manner in which he speaks of the whole population, whether ladies or gentlemen, and spoke about the action of the right hon. gentleman with reference to it—so I presume that he favors it, too. But the First Minister declared himself strongly in favor of woman suffrage, he declared the time was coming, and that soon, when it would be granted, and that he would be glad to see Canada take the first final step; and he referred to Mr. Gladstone, who, he said, was in favor of woman suffrage, and to Lord Salisbury and Sir Stafford Northcote, who had declared themselves in favor of it. Now, I think, I have read all that Mr. Gladstone has ever said on that subject—though I have not been able to refer to all his speeches since the hon. gentleman spoke—and my recollection is, that Mr. Gladstone has not delivered an opinion in favor of woman suffrage. I am quite certain that, in the late debate, when he had to meet Mr. Woodall's motion, he did not express an opinion in favor of it. He declared he would not express an opinion on the subject. He took the line of the Secretary of State. But, if I do not greatly err, in a former



debate upon the question he expressed the view that if the franchise was to be given to the other sex he saw no ground upon which it could be limited to unmarried women; he expressed the view, if I remember rightly, that it must be conferred upon married women, if conferred at all. Now, the hon. gentleman says that he will adopt Mr. Gladstone's attitude, and that he will not imperil this Bill on the question of woman suffrage. But Mr. Gladstone's attitude was wholly different. Mr. Gladstone had not brought in a Bill with woman suffrage in it. Mr. Gladstone had brought in a Bill that did not give the franchise to women. It was a Government Bill, and he was handling that Government Bill with a Government in which the question was an open question avowedly. Some members of the Government were in favor of it and others opposed to it. But what Mr. Gladstone, who had not committed himself upon the question, said, was: I will not imperil this Bill by allowing you to add the question of woman suffrage to it at all. I will express no opinion. It is an open question, so far as we are concerned, but we have a duty to discharge, and that is to carry this Bill through; and those of us who are in favor of, as well as those who are opposed to woman suffrage, take the ground that we are opposed to tacking it on to this Bill. But the hon. gentleman's view is different. He says: I have introduced a Bill. I introduced it in 1883; I introduced it in 1884, and now in 1885; and I commend it to your attention as a Government proposition. It is the Government proposition, but forsooth I will adopt Mr. Gladstone's views, and I will not imperil the Bill. The hon. gentleman had better have left it out, if he did not intend to carry it. But the hon. gentleman seems to be disposed to think that he will manage the matter. Having brought it in in the former Sessions, and having, presumably, taken the opinion of his friends upon it, he still proceeded, this Session, with that clause in; and presumably he took some opinions again,

and in the end he is to be forced to leave it out. It cannot be called an open question. Who ever heard of any Ministerial measure being an open question? It is not an open question, but he has been forced to relax the tight bonds of party discipline and graciously to give his followers liberty to vote as they please on this question. Well, the Secretary of State declared that he would not discuss the subject. He said that in different Provinces that question was not accepted in the same spirit, and that in Quebec public opinion was hostile. Now the question is no doubt a very important one. It is one of the most important questions which can be raised. I cannot conceive a more important political question than that which is raised by this clause of this Bill, and I am free to say that I do not think the First Minister discharged his duty as leader of the Government by proposing such a clause in the Bill if he did not mean to pass it, nor did he discharge his duty in the way of exposition of the views of the Government in his speech. He said but a word, upon the former occasion—he made the bare statement that the Bill conferred the franchise upon unmarried women, upon spinsters and widows. This time he made a speech, in all of eight minutes and a half, of which two minutes were devoted to the woman question, and it was devoted to the account of Mr. Gladstone's and Sir Stafford Northcote's and Lord Salisbury's opinions. That was the nature of his speech upon that question. But of reason, or of argument, or of attempt to solve the great problems involved, or to state a theory upon which they should be dealt with, we had none from the hon. gentleman. This proposal is a halting proposal. It admits, it is true, certain spinsters and widows, but not all spinsters and widows of the same class as those males who are admitted. For example, a farmer's son is entitled to be enfranchised by virtue of his father having sufficient property in his own right; but a farmer's daughter, although not married, although not subject to that disability, is

not entitled to be enfranchised though her father owns sufficient property. Now, there is a distinction without a difference, except the difference of sex. Put for a moment the marriage relation out of the question. Do as the hon. gentleman does ; treat the question on the basis on which he treats it ; treat marriage as a disability ; deal with the unmarried only, and tell me, if you please, if it be fitting that some spinsters and some widows should be enfranchised, why you should say that those spinsters should remain unenfranchised who are the daughters of farmers, having property sufficient to qualify ? I see no reason, I can understand no ground for that. But the hon. gentleman, in effect, says that marriage is a disability. Now, I ask, who seriously supposes that you can stop with this proposition, if it is once accepted ? Can it be seriously supposed that you are to stop there ? The appointed lot of the great bulk of men and women is the marriage state. The figures of the census of the Provinces indicate that, in round figures, there are of women, of the age of twenty-one and over, 1,000,000. Of those of that age of twenty-one there are 655,000 married, 105,000 widows and 245,000 unmarried. But if you run to the next point of the census, thirty-one years, you find that there are but 85,000 unmarried women of that age. So the great bulk of those who are married at twenty-one are unmarried, as we know, between that age and thirty-one, and most of them between that age and twenty-five. So we may not unnaturally say that if we take twenty-five years for the moment as a datum point, you may take 1,000,000 as the women of that age, and say that 800,000, or thereabouts are married, 100,000 are widows, and 100,000 are spinsters. Eight-tenths thus are married, and nine-tenths either are married or have been married, leaving about one-tenth of spinsters at that age. In that condition of things, I want to know why you suppose you can pause at the point at which the Government Bill proposes you should pause. Why do you suppose you can give the franchise to those out of this small minority of adult

women who may be qualified under either class, and refuse it to that great majority of about eight-tenths, who may be qualified also owners of property or income, and so forth. You cannot suppose it. If you once grant that it is for the good of the race that women should become political electors, you are driven to treat marriage not as a disability. You talk of elevating the race—the race of women and of men. You say it is for the good of the race that women should become political electors. I grant your concession for argument's sake. But there is a law higher than your laws, that is the law under which we live, the natural order under which we live and in which the appointed state of the great bulk of us is the marriage state ; and that is not for the good of the race which tells us : You are to elevate those who do not happen to be in a married state, and you are to disable them from the exercise of the elevating principle, as soon as they assume that which is the ordinary condition of the race, both as regards men and women. Will you be allowed, do you think, to say that the daughters may vote and the mothers shall not vote. Our laws are every day, and justly so, more fully recognizing the right of women to own property—the right of a woman to have her own property, independent of her husband. These conditions of amelioration are being generally accepted, and they are becoming exceedingly wide ; I do not know exactly how wide in the different Provinces. They exist in Ontario ; under the old codes, to a very large extent, they exist in Quebec, which for very many years, has had more reasonable laws on this subject than formerly prevailed in others of the Provinces. We do not recognize the old doctrine that the husband may say to the wife that all she has is his. That is no longer the doctrine. A woman's property may be her own. If a woman's property may be her own, why should we say it is for the elevation of the woman that she should have a vote, and yet deny it to eight-tenths of the women, the mothers and the wives, though they



are property owners, and give it to those who are spinsters or widows, and to those only. How can the question stop even with the right to vote? On what principle will you grant the right to elect, and deny the right to be elected? On what logical and political principle will you do that? I can apprehend inconveniences, of course, but as to them, surely the people are to be the judges. If the people choose to elect a woman, and a woman is eligible to vote, why should she not be eligible to take her seat in Parliament? On what ground can we say that people shall not have the right to choose a woman as their representative, if women have the franchise? I do not see but all these things are to be opened by this Bill, and that we may, some day or other, under the Government's proposition when fully developed, have a Speaker in a gown, it is true, but of a different kind and framed on different plans from that which you, Mr. Speaker, wear. These questions are all opened by this Bill; it is certain they are not closed. They are opened by this Bill; and even the proposition brought forward is brought forward without popular approbation? Have we been told by the hon. gentleman at any election that this was his policy? The hon. gentleman says that he has always favored it. But he kept it, like many others of his favorites, in his bosom. He did not tell anybody of his secret affection for the female franchise, he did not disclose his hidden love:

"Concealment, like a worm in the bud, preyed on his damask cheek."

He alone knew how devoted he was to the sex. Why did he not let us know; why did he not let them know? Why did he woo them so much in secret that they did not know he was wooing them at all? How did it happen that this unrequited attachment of the First Minister did not become known. I maintain that if the hon. gentleman nourished those views, and nourished them not merely as theoretical views and ideas which he would like to see put in

force, but did not intend to take the responsibility of bringing forward, but as practical ideas, on which he was going to legislate, he was bound to have told the people at large, and to have said: I am in favor of woman suffrage, and I am not merely in favor of it, but I propose, if you elect me and my supporters, to use my influence and position to accomplish that which I conceive to be a great reform. We did not know anything about this until the hon. gentleman was in office. Has there been any agitation on this question; has there been any discussion on it amongst the people? Yes; I think I hear the hon. gentleman say: A petition or two was presented. But the greatest marks of surprise upon the subject were exhibited by the few agitators for the women's suffrage themselves, who met and passed a resolution of thanks to the hon. gentlemen for having spontaneously and without request done so much more for them than they expected. Now, I maintain that that is not the way in which a great idea of this kind should germinate and ripen until it becomes an Act of Parliament. I maintain that there ought to be suggestions by responsible statesmen, agitation and discussion, and a fair opportunity for the people at large to decide what they will have upon such a subject, before you propose to legislate at all. Then, I say, that so little did the hon. gentleman discharge what I conceive to be his duty, if he were about to propose such a measure, that he has not even really spoken upon it; we have not really got his reasons for it. Now, that is not the view which the great statesman to whom he has referred took in his last speech of the nature of this question. He did not think it as a thing so easily settled as to be disposed of in one and a-half or two minutes, as it was in the speech of the First Minister, not backed up by his colleagues. What is the character which he gives this question?

"My own opinions," says Mr. Gladstone, "upon this question, if I am to describe them in rude outline, are: that it is a ques-

tion of immense difficulty, a question upon which nothing hasty is to be done, a question which requires absolutely to be sifted to the bottom, a question which should be completely disassociated from every movement of party, and every important political consideration, and upon which the House of Commons can only, by a strict adherence to these rules, arrive at a satisfactory conclusion."

Now, can you conceive a statesman like Mr. Gladstone, to whom the hon. gentleman has referred, arriving at a conclusion to treat this question as a Ministerial question, and bringing forward a Bill to give it effect; dealing without a single argument with a question, the character of which he has described in the words I have quoted. No, Sir; it would have been unworthy of him, and it was hardly worthy even of the right hon. gentleman to touch the subject so lightly if he was going to touch it at all. Now, I agree with the view Mr. Gladstone has stated, that this question is one of immense difficulty, and I dare say it is not at all necessary thoroughly to attempt to discuss it. In so far as the question of keenness of intellect is concerned, we know that some of the brightest brains in the world are those of women; in so far as interest in public affairs is concerned, we know that many of the keenest politicians have been, and from time to time are to be found, in the ranks of women; and in so far as political sagacity is concerned, we know that you have many striking examples in the ranks of women. All these things are not merely to be conceded, but freely to be stated and rejoiced in. But they by no means solve the question. I, myself, have not infrequently stated my earnest desire that my fellow-countrywomen should take a more active interest than they do in public affairs; that they should acquaint themselves more thoroughly than they do with public questions, and I rejoice when I see them attending our political discussions and informing their minds on public questions. But while that is so, and while I believe there is a very satisfactory and progressive improvement in that department of this question, I ask

the candid consideration of the House, and of the men and women of the country to the question, whether the women have as yet, as a class—if we are to call them so—as a sex, as a whole, taken up politics in the way we do. I do not think the men pay sufficient attention to public affairs. I do not think that the electors give that attention which they ought to give to the current of public events. I do not think they do their full duty, or that they are fully alive to their responsibility as electors of this country. I think much has to be done, in the way of informing them what that duty is, and in enlisting from them a more active discharge of it. But whatever the shortcomings of the men may be, it is clear, up to this time, that women have taken less steady and active interest in public affairs than those who are the electors. Now, do you wish to see them take that measure of interest that we do in politics? Unquestionably, yes, if you wish them to be voters. There is no more dangerous element in the voting community of the country than the mass which does not take a keen and active interest in public affairs, on one side or the other. I say the mass who do not inform themselves and keep their interest alive—and there are too many of them among the men of the country to-day—the mass do not keep alive their interest in public affairs, is a mass which is dangerous and which impairs and sometimes imperils the stability of our institutions. Therefore, unquestionably, you do wish them to take an interest. Then, do you wish them to become delegates to your conventions; to become committee women; to become canvassers? I say yes, if they are going to be voters. I say you cannot double the voting population of the country without danger, if you do not hope that the added population will take the same degree of interest and activity in the formation of public opinion, the organization of public opinion, as the rest; and therefore you must wish these things. Therefore it is, Sir, that the question before you is a momentous question—the question



whether you are to make electors of the women is a question not to be dealt with in a speech of one and a-half minutes, even by a gentleman of the authority of the First Minister, it should not be settled without full and ample thought and deliberation, without full consideration by the people at large, without full consideration by the women of the country themselves, without an appreciation of what their wishes are—which are important to the consideration of this question, because I think it would be a mistake to force the franchise on a reluctant portion of the population—if they be reluctant to accept the franchise, as to which, again, one has no opportunity of forming an opinion, except from the absence of application for the purpose. I say we have got to consider, then, the whole bearings of this proposition in the extent to which, in my opinion, it will inevitably lead. I do not believe the wives and mothers of Canada will be content to see the daughters and widows voting, and will support the proposition that they should vote the view, that it elevates the sex that they should vote, and yet should find themselves relegated to the lower sphere of those who are debarred from voting because they are wives. I do not believe in that view at all. I do not think that we should in one breath say it is good for women; it is good for spinsters; it is good for widows; it is good for the race; it is for the elevation of women that they shall vote, but it is bad for the married woman. I do not think so at all; and therefore I think the question of their opinion and of their condition, must be taken into account on this subject. I do not intend, as I have said, to discuss what the present place of woman is, and what the future of woman is to be, but if you will allow me, I will read you what I think is some very good philosophy, couched in glorious poetry, on that subject, and which, although I do not agree with all it says, I think it tells as much on the problem which the hon. gentleman has submitted to us, as has been told in any time past

in so short a space:

"The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink  
Together dwarf'd or Godlike, bond or free;  
For she that out of Lethe scales with man  
The shining steps of nature, shares with man  
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal  
Stays all the fair young plumes in her hands—  
If she be small slight-natured, miserable,  
How shall men grow? But work no more alone;  
Our place is much; as far as in us lies,  
We two will serve them both in aiding her—  
Will clear away the parasitic forms  
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—  
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all  
Within her—let her make herself her own,  
To give or keep, to live and learn and be  
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.  
For woman is not undevelop't man,  
But diverse; could we make her as the man,  
Sweet love were slain; his dearest bond is this.  
Not like to like, but like in difference.  
Yet in the long years liker must they grow.—  
The man be more of woman, she of man;  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the  
world;  
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;  
Till at the last she set herself to man,  
Like perfect music unto noble words;  
And so these twain, upon the skirts of time,  
Sit side by side, full summ'd in all their powers,  
Dispensing harvest, sowing the to-be,  
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,  
Distinct in individualities,  
But like each other ev'n as those who love.  
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men;  
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste  
and calm;  
Then springs the growing race of humankind.  
May these things be."

Yes; may these things be. But I believe that the philosophy which is indicated in those verses is a philosophy which requires deep study before you can decide that these things are to be by the hon. gentleman's proposal to confer the rights of voting upon spinsters and widows, and to leave out those to whom these verses are addressed—the married women. Now, as I have said, the only safe process in this matter is discussion—gradual discussion, thorough discussion; and the result of that discussion may be, indeed probably will be—for we have to look far off—a diversity of opinion in the different Provinces. The hon. Secretary of State to-day frankly admitted that on this branch of the Bill there are two opinions. There is the

hostile opinion in the Province of Quebec; there is perhaps a favorable opinion in some of the other Provinces; I argue for leaving each Province to settle its own franchise. If you do not want woman franchise in the Province of Quebec, you are free not to have it; but leave the people to decide whether they shall have it or not. Woman franchise may be popular in the Province of Ontario, let the Province of Ontario pass a law to give women the franchise; that does not hurt Quebec, but gives Ontario that which best suits her. And so with reference to the other Provinces. No stronger argument for the adaptability and convenience of an independent franchise for each Province can be found than that provision of this Bill, and the statement of the Secretary of State with reference to the woman franchise. Now, I want to touch on one remaining topic, that of the revising officers. Upon that topic, I wish to remind you of the First Minister's statement, when, at an early period, he proposed this measure. He then declared, when proposing the Bill which should establish revising barristers the nominees of the Government, that this was analogous to the English system where, he said, revising officers are appointed by the Lord Chancellor, who is a member of the Administration. That was the hon. gentleman's declaration; and, he said, here the Government is going to appoint them. The hon. gentleman was, in two respects, entirely wrong in that statement. In the first place, the revising officer in England is not the revising officer the hon. gentleman proposes to appoint; he does not make the lists; he revises them only. In the second place, the revising officer is not appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The revising officer for the county of Middlesex is appointed by the Lord Chief Justice, who is not a political officer; and in the other constituencies the revising officers are appointed by the senior judge going on the Assizes each year. And the hon. gentleman, for the purpose of assimilating this provision to the English practice of appointing revising

barristers by the judges of the land, made them out to be appointments by the Lord Chancellor, and declared that he was following the steps of British precedent. What the hon. gentleman does, is to take within the control of the Administration the appointment of these officers. Now, let us consider this a title. A little while ago the hon. gentleman wanted to excite a prejudice against the system of license inspectors being appointed by a Local Government, and what did he declare? He said the Local Government would appoint partisan license inspectors, who would exercise a baneful influence on the tavern keepers with reference to their votes. There was the danger, which was to be avoided by appointing independent persons, not under the control of the Government. Was it that he was so virtuous, and that other people were so vicious, that he could be entrusted with a power that others would abuse? Was it in reliance upon his well-known and thoroughly well-ascertained character of declining to avail himself of casual political advantages of one kind or another that the hon. gentleman was stating his argument? No; it was not on the argument of the nature of our First Minister, though good, or of a Provincial Minister, though bad. It was the nature of things, the weakness of humanity, that the hon. gentleman referred to; it was a bad thing that a Government should be allowed to appoint license inspectors, because of the influence they would exercise on the tavern-keepers, with respect to their franchise. But the hon. gentleman who said that, proposes to take to himself the appointment of the man who is to make the voters' lists, who is to empanel the jury that is to try himself. Now, the English system has for its basis the local making of the lists. I have spoken of local liberties in the sense of provincial liberties; but I say that municipal liberties are not less important. It has been recognized in England by the students of free institutions that the nurseries of larger liberties are minor local liber-



ties; and that the powers of action of municipal bodies, within their narrow sphere of executive work business done, and of functions and privileges enjoyed, are of the greatest consequence, as educating the people in the general principles of representative government; and in those restraints, under constituted authorities, which are essential to the establishment of a Democratic, and yet orderly and stable system of Government, I say, then, that the privileges which the municipalities enjoy in England, of making the lists through their overseers and officers, are ancient and important privileges, and if the hon. gentleman defers to British practice, he had better follow it here. But the hon. gentleman says: Oh, I am making the revising officers entirely independent; they are to be kept in office; they are not to be dependent on the will of my Government. Of course not. First of all, he appoints them; they do their duty to his satisfaction; they make the lists as he likes them to be made; they return members to support him; and then they are not to be turned out by the Parliament. Do you not think, Mr. Speaker, that the tenure of office will be just as secure without that provision? Is it at all likely that the Parliament they have made will turn them out? Surely they will not be so ungrateful; surely the Parliament will not allow the Government to turn them out, if they hold their office during these gentlemen's pleasure. This is a perversion, a total misapplication of the supposed benefits of an independent tenure of office. For the discharge of a duty, the most delicate in the world, that of establishing the lists by which it is to be decided whether the Government are to continue in power or not, the Government takes the power of selecting the men, and undoubtedly they will select safe men; and if any of these do not do the work effectively, and the Government continue in office, the House of Commons will turn them out, but not otherwise. The hon. gentleman's Bill is worse than his old Bill. His former Bill

provided for the making of lists by three men, whom he was to nominate, but those lists were to be revised by the county and district judges; after the first making of the lists the Government nominees had no more to do with them for all time. All future dealings with the lists were to be in the hands of judicial officers. His present proposal, however, is to put these revising lists into the hands of his own nominees for all time. He is, in fact, proposing a scheme by which he can take control of the polls. The lists are to be made right for the Conservatives, and the Reformers will have to fight against them. The Secretary of State said that the lists could not be got from the local officers, because we cannot command their services. But we can command their services; we can command the services of every citizen of this country, whether he be a local officer or not, to do things which are within our jurisdiction as the Federal Parliament. We do so in the case of sheriffs and other officers. We have got rid of that doctrine, used by the right hon. gentleman many times in early days, that we could not force judges and other persons to discharge duties we order them to discharge; we can force any citizen of Canada, we can force any local or municipal officer, to discharge that duty which it is within our province to impose upon him, in that the country may be well governed. The municipal councils do not make the franchise, says the Secretary of State. No; but the local officers decide, in the first instance, who, under the laws, are entitled to the franchise. That is the course here and in England; and, on the whole, it is the most satisfactory course. The judges, he says, are not more independent than the revising officers, because they are paid by the Government, and equally obnoxious because they are appointed by the Government. But are they appointed for this purpose? No; they are appointed to dispense justice. Their whole character, their standing in the community, their instincts, their lives spent in the dispensation of justice—all these are against the supposi-

tion, and you cannot, you must not suppose, that they will, when they are called upon as judges to discharge this particular duty, depart from their ordinary rule of life, and degrade themselves in the eyes of those for whom they are acting by acting unjustly. There is, however, no such safeguard in the case of the revising officers, who will be selected as political men for a political and particular purpose. But, says the Secretary of State, there will be an appeal, the same as there is now. The Secretary of State declared that this was a very easy and simple Bill, one with which we are all thoroughly familiar; but he proved that there was, at any rate, one member of this House who did not know it, who had a good deal to study before he could say he was familiar with it, and that one member of this House, with reference to whom the Secretary of State falsified his statement, was the Secretary of State himself. He declared that there was an appeal, as before. First of all, the 46th section gives an appeal, if the revising officer thinks it reasonable and proper to allow the appeal. I remember a county court judge who was a little unfortunate with the appeals that were made from his judgment; and after there had been a great many reversals, he said one day to a friend of his at the bar: "I really cannot understand how it is that they always just happen to appeal from me in the cases in which I am wrong." His decisions were always reversed when appealed from, and so he thought those were the only cases in which he was wrong. Now, if that county court judge had been permitted, in every case, to decide whether an appeal should be allowed, he would have taken good care only to allow an appeal to be taken in cases in which he was certain that he was right, and that the appeal would be dismissed. How much an appeal from the revising officer, to be made only when that gentleman considers it quite safe to allow his decision to be appealed from, is worth, I leave you to say. What is more, the appeal is only to be allowed on questions of law;

no appeal is to be allowed from the decision of the revising officer in matters of fact. But the admission or rejecting of a vote is of itself mainly a matter of fact. We know perfectly well that if you allow a revising officer to decide on the evidence, and will not allow any appeal from his decision, as to the admissibility or the weight of evidence, and if you allow him to make up the cases in which an appeal is to be had, and if, finally, to make quite sure that there will be no inconvenient appeals, you allow him to decide when an appeal should be given, you may as well take away the right of appeal, altogether. But the Secretary of State says there is to be an appeal, as at present. I would advise the hon gentleman to study the Bill before discussing it further. Then he says it is impossible to get the judges, when you want them, always, and this is only to be used in cases of necessity. Why not say so in the Bill? Why not say the judges shall be appointed, and it is only in case of some such necessity that this other provision is to be used. If you remunerate the judges they will do this work and you intend to remunerate the returning officers. There will be no difficulty. But the hon. gentleman asks us to give away the authority to cause every list to be revised by the revising barrister, and he says, we will only use this power where we must. But he may consider one of the cases of necessity to be the necessity of making a list right. That has always been the policy of the hon. First Minister. He took to himself the nomination of the returning officers; he took hold of the days of election; he declined to have one day of election, and insisted on having the day of election according to his will, so that he might fix them in the way he thought would best help himself and damage his adversaries; he insisted that the committees of Parliament should decide cases of contested elections. In the two latter instances he was ultimately forced to yield, after a violent and protracted agitation and a decided expression of public opinion. He was forced to give up the days of election and the



election courts, but not until we had from him many speeches, saying that it was most monstrous to have the elections on the one day, and outrageous to have them decided by the judges of the land. When, however, it was impossible for him to resist public opinion longer, he yielded to it, and I believe he claims credit for the legislation in these two instances. With reference to the returning officers, he took possession of them, and when my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie) came in, he restored the provision, the provision which, according to the hon. gentleman's view, might work fairly in some cases, where the Local Government was Liberal, but would work adversely in others. Take the Province of Quebec, which, at the time my hon. friend from East York restored the provision, was Conservative. Take the Province of New Brunswick, which was Conservative, and so on. You find it worked both ways, if it worked at all. My hon. friend restored it, and there was no complaint then. Why, I remember an hon. member then, who now occupies a place at the table, complaining across the House, when I was Minister of Justice, because, the law being so, that there was a choice between registrar and sheriff, I had not chosen the sheriff, but the registrar. He said I ought to have chosen the sheriff, because he was first. The fact was, the sheriff was the better of the candidate, and I gave that as my reason; but, when they were in that position, they thought it dreadful to take the law to that extent that, when there was a choice between the two officers, we should choose the second of the two and should not choose the first one, though he was a brother of the candidate. They were so strict then, in regard to the matter, and, having taken all the benefit of my hon. friend's change

when they returned to office they took hold of the returning officers again and they now appoint them all. The hon. gentleman took the money of the public contractors in 1872, and subsequently, when he got back here in 1882, he took the electoral districts, and now he is taking the voters' lists. His efforts have been to secure and retain and increase a majority by the use of these powers, powers which ought not to be in the hands of Governments, in the great contest between the two political parties as to which has the majority of public opinion; powers which ought, as far as possible, to be kept out of the hands of Governments, which, being human, are liable to misuse them. Well, the hon. gentleman may succeed in procuring the passage of this clause, as to the appointment of revising officers, which he did not say anything about, which he did not intimate might be considered an open question, so that any of his supporters who felt they could not conscientiously accept a revising officer of their own nomination might be free to vote against it. He did not make this an open question, and he has not defended it as yet. He may succeed in carrying it; but, as he has from time to time found that many of these efforts to obtain control have failed, though many of them have succeeded, I hope and trust that this effort, even if successful here, will be less successful elsewhere; that a spirit of fair play and justice will be dominant through the land; that the people at large will say that the hon. gentleman ought to deal as he would be dealt by; that they will say there ought to be a pure and equitable and honest system of making the lists, and that he will not derive at any rate, all the advantage from this disposition which, in his secret heart, he hopes to obtain.

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